TWO CHARGES

DELIVERED TO THE

CLERGY

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY OF ST. ALBAN'S.

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BY JOSEPH HOLDEN POTT,
PREBENDARY OF LINCOLN, AND ARCHDEACON OF ST. ALBAN'S.

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M.D.CC.XCIII.

TO THE REVEREND

THE CLERGY

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY OF ST. ALBAN's.

REVEREND BRETHREN,

PERMIT me to inſcribe to you the following Diſcourſes. They were intended principally for your hearing, and may therefore, without impropriety, be committed to your hands.

I give

I give them with more readineſs to the view of others alſo, becauſe they bear a teſtimony concerning you, to which the common intereſt in things belonging to the Church, annexes general importance.

I remain

Your affectionate

and faithful ſervant,

J. H. POTT.

A

CHARGE TO THE CLERGY

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY of *St. ALBAN's.*

DELIVERED MAY 4th, 1791.

REVEREND BRETHREN,

A PAROCHIAL viſitation forming the chief object of my care for the preſent year, I am induced to addreſs ſome remarks to you, concerning the tokens of proſperity, which ſhould appear in Chriſt's houſehold, when it is eſtabliſhed in peace; more eſpecially, as they ſhould be manifeſted in the public edifices appropriated to religious uſes.

It will conduce much to a right ſenſe of thoſe bleſſings of temporal proſperity, among which the regular proviſion for the ſervice of God, and the culture of religion, holds a chief place, to return frequently, in our thoughts and recollections, to the grounds upon which they reſt. We ſhould embrace with pleaſure any opportunity for contemplating the protection which the Church in any age has experienced in the world, to ſecure its tranquillity, to rear the columns of its ſacred edifices, to ſettle all things in order, decency, and beauty.

Let us for a moment view the grounds and reaſons of that ſalutary union, which connects the two main ſtems of Government in Chriſtian States.

Many circumſtances in the Jewiſh polity were peculiar to the choſen people, and ſprang from cauſes which were not to endure: but we may remark in general, that where God has determined any form, or delivered any maxims,

maxims, to which the circumſtances of all people in every age may agree, there he diſplays a light, there he eſtabliſhes a truth. Moſt commendable then appears the wiſdom of our Church, in fixing her attention on the Jewiſh pattern for her union with the State, and in adopting that authentic model which was accompliſhed by divine appointment.

But the ſame God who interwove the civil and religious diſpenſations in the government of Iſrael, pointed alſo to their union in ſucceeding times; declaring, that he would make a Covenant for his people with thoſe who had long perſecuted them, that the Princes of the earth ſhould miniſter unto, build up the wall, and be the Nurſing-fathers of the Church; that they ſhould come, offer gifts, rejoice in the light of the Goſpel, and bring their glory and honour into it; intimating, by this eſpecial mention of them, the concern they were to have in ſetting forward the intereſts of religion. The books of the Prophets abound in declarations to this

effect. Many are the teſtimonies which declared, that the ſtrength of the earth, and the meekneſs of the Goſpel, ſhould be confederated. In this ſenſe have many paſſages throughout the Scripture been underſtood, and conſtantly interpreted.

The Chriſtian Church was to compriſe all nations, and was therefore to ſet forth with a manifeſt independence upon any of the empires of the world. Thus it appeared at firſt. It floated like the Ark, till God gave it reſt: it wandered like the Tabernacle, till God fixed it in ſecurity and public honour. It was not planted under the ſhadow of human greatneſs; it was not founded upon any earthly power. On the other hand, it erected no new governments. It maintained the powers of the world in all the rights which they poſſeſſed, and therefore, upon their converſion, was entitled to a full protection from them in its own rights.

It was a ſimple dictate of reaſon and duty, an obvious meaſure of equity, when Kings and Magiſtrates were converted to the Chriſtian Faith, that for the honour of God, for the benefit of their ſubjects, and for the diſcharge of their own conſciences, they ſhould protect the Church into which they were received. The leaſt proficiency in the rules of wiſdom, could not fail to teach them, that the intereſts of religion, and the common good, were much and moſt naturally connected, that the encouragement of piety and godlineſs becomes an object of concern to all who bear rule of any kind, ſo long as Conſcience is the chief bond of honeſty, and Virtue the main ſtrength of nations.

No Laws are adequate to the capacity and character of man (a religious nature conſtituting his chief eminence in the creation) which are not ſanctioned by the fear of God; nor will the peace of any people be ſecure, without the ſeal of righteouſneſs: and thus, although a tem-

a temporal Good, and an eternal Good, may in ſome reſpects appear to be diſtinct, yet, having many meaſures common to them, being ſerved and promoted by many common means and motives, the laws regarding them muſt often coincide, and in the ſame proportion muſt the civil and ſpiritual Rulers have joint objects for their care.

It could create no jarring juriſdiction that the ordinances of the Church, which prevail by their own virtue, ſhould prevail alſo by the will of thoſe who govern in the world.

Accordingly, the firſt converted States and Rulers fulfilled the word of prophecy when they were given to the Church, protecting it in the form in which it had deſcended;—in that form, if protected, it required to be maintained. A protection which ſhould leave its genuine conſtitution liable to change, or open to invaſion, would be worſe than the ſevereſt perſecution. The bittereſt ſtorms of heathen rage never could induce

duce thoſe who exerciſed the ſpiritual rule and miniſtry in Chriſt's houſehold, to betray its ſacred rights, or to forfeit its appointed orders.

It was no light bleſſing to the Church, to receive that pledge of peace and good-will, which is the baſis of her temporal tranquillity. Nor is there wanting an adequate return. Protection is the benefit extended; the encouragement of all good order, of virtue, loyalty, and peace, under the ſanctions of religion, the benefit returned: duty is the common bond of union, and mutual advantages are the ſure reſults.

To that foſtering care, which we have briefly traced and eſtimated, we owe, among other benefits, to be remembered ever with a grateful heedfulneſs, thoſe to which I muſt now confine myſelf in this addreſs—the number, beauty, and good order of the edifices which are conſecrated to the uſes of religious worſhip and devotion.

It could not be doubted, but that the ſame prudence which occaſioned David of old time to conſider the cauſes which had brought a bleſſing upon the houſe of Obed-Edom—the ſame piety which made that excellent Monarch ſigh in ſecret in his palace of cedar, becauſe the Ark of the Lord abode under curtains—the ſame ſenſe of duty which inclined him at all hazards to attempt to bring the ſacred depoſitory of God's covenant into Jeruſalem—would operate in the minds of the powerful and opulent, inducing them to raiſe the Churches of Chriſt with ſplendour and magnificence.

The ſame ſpirit which prompted Solomon to conſtruct a ſhort and eaſy paſſage to the Temple from his own dwelling, and to fix his royal manſion upon the borders of the Lord's houſe, moved our Anceſtors to raiſe the hallowed places of aſſembly within the verge of that circle in which their daily footſteps were to tread; that neither the inclemency of wintry ſkies, nor the infirmities of age, might prevent them from having

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an eaſy acceſs to the courts of prayer and public worſhip. They loved to place their dwellings within the ſhadow of that houſe where God is wont to receive the ſupplications of his people, and to diſpenſe eſpecial bleſſings.

The preſence of the houſe of God among us in all parts where the habitations of men are gathered together, cheers the heart, and furniſhes a good token of our common faith: it yields alſo a frequent and conſolatory teſtimony, that the Miniſtry of Chriſt maintains a place among us.

Before the days of Moſes, we find the Patriarchs neither founding cities, nor planning governments. They lived as men profeſſing to ſeek a country. In ſucceeding times, the people of Iſrael, accuſtomed chiefly to agriculture, were not much addicted to the arts of building. It ſhould ſeem indeed that they were withheld from all attempts to increaſe the bounds,

or to aggrandize the glory of any one place, in order, perhaps, to prevent the many evils which ſo conſtantly prevail where men collect together for the mere purpoſes of luxury and pleaſure. Jeruſalem was the common centre of religious worſhip, but was not augmented even for that good purpoſe. The Tribes were bound for ever to their ſeveral portions; and in order that they might come up at ſtated ſeaſons, to appear before the Lord, an expreſs promiſe was given of miraculous protection for their territories and abodes, until their return. But they who contented themſelves with ſimple manſions, and lived amidſt the fruits of their induſtry, and in the lot of their inheritance, exulted in the beauty of their Temple, which God cauſed to be conſtructed, and which he ſanctified ſo eminently with his in-dwelling glory. They took delight in the decorous ſervices of their public ſacrifice and worſhip.

In the reſtoration of Jeruſalem under Nehemiah, we read, that there was more joy for the Prieſts and

Levites

Levites that waited, than for the return of the people to their own land. So great was the affection which the people teſtified at all times for the holy Temple, that their regard burſt forth into tears and lamentations, when, upon the building of the ſecond houſe, the aged men among them called to mind the glory of the firſt.

Thus the people of God of old time were well aware, that to build the houſe of the Lord with their beſt coſt, and to decorate it with becoming ornaments, was required, upon the prime ground of all religion, by which we are taught, that God ſhould be honoured with a portion of the plenty which he furniſhes, and with a meaſure of the wealth which he beſtows.

Nor were the firſt Chriſtians wanting in the ſame ſpirit. Before they enjoyed the bleſſing of protection from any Chriſtian Prince, when the rage of perſecution abated for a ſeaſon, we find them raiſing and adorning their Churches with becoming magnificence.

When at any time the cruel hand of malice was relaxed, and they had ſpace given them to breathe and to recover, their firſt exertions were employed in building ſpacious churches. Diocleſian deſtroyed many, which had riſen under the precarious indulgence extended by ſeveral of the Emperors. When Maximin confirmed the favourable edict of Galerius, we read that the ſacred edifices were built up to a vaſt height, and ornamented with more coſt and beauty than their former founders had been able to beſtow upon them. It cannot therefore be objected, that the magnificence of ſuch buildings was occaſioned by the warm influence of proſperous times, and by the redundant bounty of princely converts. It appears rather, that it ever was a matter much at heart among the diſciples of Chriſt in all ages, to make the houſe of the Lord a memorial not only of their Martyrs, but of their own ardent piety, and noble zeal.

The character and tokens of humility and abaſement are proper to every man who underſtands his own condition; the precepts of the Goſpel inculcate them for that reaſon: but to tranſlate them to ſacred things, which have relation to God as well as to us, is a manifeſt miſtake. We ſhould ſurely diſtinguiſh what is perſonal to ourſelves, and accidental to religion upon that account, from what is fitting with reſpect to any act, office, or place, which regards God in any manner: the coſt is well beſtowed by which ſuch things are rendered excellent and glorious. Upon theſe reaſons, holy men in all times, who laid their foreheads in the duſt, and deſpiſed the luxuries of life, yet without reluctance, and without the ſhadow of inconſiſtency, wore the fair ornaments of their ſacred function, and never judged that to be vain-glorious, which was proper—not to their humility, and private lowlineſs—but to offices of high importance and of ſacred character.

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With regard further to the ſacred edifices, we know well that the moſt ſumptuous buildings cannot give a ſuitable reflection of the majeſty and glory of God; but they may exhibit the tokens of our reſpect, and may be adapted to excite a reverend regard in the boſoms of his ſervants: much of the coſt of the Jewiſh temple was calculated to theſe ends, which cannot be thought to be ſuperceded.

The houſe of prayer is ſanctified, as all things ſacred are, by ſerving to the purpoſes of devotion, and to the ends of true religion. That relation demands our reverence, and ſhould engage our endeavours to maintain the correſpondence, and to make it appear, that being deſigned and appropriated to the worſhip of God, the excellency of that end is not forgotten in their ſtructure and decoration.

We cannot but remember that Chriſt would not endure that the Temple ſhould become a place of traffic; and

and that his holy Apoſtle would not ſuffer it to be frequented for the common purpoſes of ordinary dwellings.

We cannot forget that God hath indiſſolubly joined theſe two precepts, "Keep my ſabbath; reverence my ſanctuary."

To us, my Brethren, it belongs eſpecially, to encourage and promote ſuch works of piety and munificence as may conduce to reſtore, enlarge, adorn, and multiply the dedicated places of religious worſhip and communion. With conſtant opportunities for obſervation, and I doubt not, with conſtant zeal for the good appearance, the beauty, and, as far as may be fit, the ſplendour of all things appertaining to religion, and to the houſe of God, you will not fail to be attentive guardians of the ſacred edifices, part of which it reſts with you more eſpecially to maintain, and the whole of which belongs to you in a ſignal ſenſe by your incumbency.

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The wiſdom of timely ſuccours, of preventive care, and early repairs, is ſufficiently known to all who are converſant in any degree in ſuch matters, and ſhould be remembered with a conſtant heedfulneſs.

The pious Mr. Nelſon, in his addreſs to perſons of quality, puts the care for the places of religious worſhip, for their conſtruction, enlargement, and repair, as his firſt propoſal for promoting the welfare of the ſouls of men. "If (ſays he) the enemy of our ſalvation can "once prevail upon men to neglect the neceſſary pro- "viſion of places, where they may meet to pay their "public acknowledgements to the great Author of our "being, he will quickly make them indifferent whe- "ther they offer any public worſhip at all. It were "(he adds) much to be wiſhed, that a proviſion could "be found, both for increaſing the number of them "when wanted, and for repairing and making new the "old." He preſſes this care upon the rich and great, with regard to ſuch Churches as may be in the neighbourhood

bourhood of their large domains, in order, as he adds, "That the bountiful donor of what they enjoy, may "be conſtantly adored, there, from whence his ſupplies "proceed; and this, he adds, is the firſt method which "I ſhall offer for doing good to the ſouls of men." Theſe ſuggeſtions were addreſſed by him to perſons of rank, among whom he held a place, being no leſs diſtinguiſhed for all polite accompliſhments, than for his exemplary piety; and they may, through you, my Brethren, be addreſſed to them again, as your diſcretion ſhall ſuggeſt.

It would furniſh no favourable token of the growth and encouragement of religion in the world, if men were to adapt the meaſure of their churches to their neceſſities; and that of their houſes, to their pride; if the ſpirit of magnificence, which expands in wide and rich apartments, when they are decorated with a private name, ſhould contract itſelf to bare walls and ſcanty ſpaces, where the name of God is placed.

The departure, in many inſtances where churches have been rebuilt, from the appropriate form and model of the ancient churches, deſerves ſome note of cenſure. The form and names of the ſeveral parts of the ſacred buildings have ever been ſignificant, and therefore ſhould not be varied or relinquiſhed without good cauſe. This remark might be extended to ſeveral matters in the ſtructure and poſition of things which have place within the walls of our churches, which, as I am perſuaded they are well known and underſtood by you, will I truſt alſo be duly regarded.

If the reaſon given for the cuſtom in any ſuch caſes appear to be ſlight, let us remember that it becomes important, when it is weighed againſt a wanton and unmeaning alteration—againſt a novelty, without a reaſon.

I ſhall only add, with reference to the main deſign of this addreſs, that whilſt you, my Brethren, continue to be vigilant in that part of your care which regards the

the public edifices appropriated for religious worſhip, it will not, I ſhould hope, be poſſible for neglect and ſordidneſs, the lamentable witneſſes of irreligion, to appear in the houſe of God.

Of your concurrence in all good endeavours I have the beſt aſſurance, and, from obſerving the exertion of them, ſhall derive the trueſt ſatisfaction.

A

CHARGE TO THE CLERGY

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY of *St. ALBAN's.*

DELIVERED MAY 25, 1792.

REVEREND BRETHREN,

IN the holy Scriptures, the Church is ſaid to be the ground and pillar of truth. The words have been diverſely interpreted; but, in the loweſt ſenſe, they furniſh this teſtimony, that the cuſtody of divine truth is committed to the Church throughout all ages.

Without contending for an infallible judge in controverſy, we may with joy believe that the Houſehold to which

which Chriſt has promiſed never-failing ſuccours and protection, will continue to preſerve his laws, to maintain and vindicate his doctrines, to fulfil his rules and ordinances, to declare his will, and to execute his precepts.

Many have been the pretenſions urged to appropriate the characters and tokens of Chriſt's flock. I am not now about to vindicate our claim. The ſucceſſion of our miniſtry, the conformity of our doctrine to the holy Scriptures, the correſpondence of our eccleſiaſtical regimen to that which from the days of the Apoſtles hath prevailed, the excellence and beauty of our public ſervice, which declines the pomps and ſuperſtitions of later ages, without departing from the venerable uſage of the earlieſt and beſt days of Chriſtianity, have been frequently made good.

I wiſh, however, for a moment to invite your attention to one circumſtance, in which the Catholic character

racter appears to me to attach moſt eminently and conſpicuouſly to the Church of England.

Its independence upon private authority, is that authentic token to which I allude.

It was the glory of the Church in early times, that its cauſe did not depend upon the arm of any ſingle champion. When the hand of Malice cut off one holy Confeſſor, his place and office were readily ſupplied. When one fruitful Branch was ſtruck down, the Parent-ſtock remained uninjured: new ſhoots were rather multiplied, ſpreading and encreaſing with redoubled vigour.

When the ſword of a barbarous and ignorant ſoldier was plunged into the boſom of the Philoſopher of Syracuſe, whilſt he was purſuing his diſcoveries, the advances of Science might be retarded by the blow; but when one holy martyr was called to ſuffer for the

name

name of Chriſt, another Witneſs ſucceeded, and the ſcope and progreſs of divine truth were in no degree impeded.

The company of Believers might lament the fall of any advocate for the cauſe of righteouſneſs; but the Founder of their faith, the ſole Patron of their common hope had once taſted death, in order that he might become the perpetual Advocate of his people. To him therefore their hearts and their prayers were directed, as to an everliving Lord, who, if it pleaſed him, could raiſe up Stewards to the houſe of Abraham, of the very ſtones by which ſome received their martyrdom.

In ſtrict conformity to the pattern of paſt ages, the Church to whoſe miniſtry we are called, has exhibited this characteriſtic note of truth and catholic integrity. It acknowledges no Champion: it confides in no ſingle arm: it imbibes no tincture from the colour of any man's opinion.

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In the hour of reformation, which was a ſeaſon of much difficulty and hazard, this temper was manifeſted in a ſignal manner within theſe realms. The counſel of individuals, famous for their zeal, was ſometimes aſked; but when it was obtruded, with the authority of perſonal direction, it was rejected flatly. Happy had it been for other branches of the reformed Church, if they had not pledged themſelves to the private notions, and even to the particular ſtraits and neceſſities of favourite leaders. *

They who conducted the great work of reſcinding what had been corruptly introduced among us, ſeem never to have forgotten that main principle upon which the guardianſhip aſcribed by the Apoſtle to the Church, is founded—that the word of truth is not entruſted to the excluſive arbitration of any (much leſs of One, as hath been pretended), but to the cuſtody of all.

* A ſtriking inſtance of this is produced by Mr. Hooker, in the ſequel of the preface to his celebrated work.

According to their ſtation and degree, all who believe, are bound to hold the form of ſound words, to conſerve that ſymbol uncorrupted, to vindicate it to the world, but without the power of adding to it, or diminiſhing therefrom.

From theſe general remarks, I ſhall take occaſion to draw one ſpecial inference, which I propoſe to purſue a little further—that we are bound upon the ſame truly catholic and ſound principles, to avoid either mere reſpect of perſons, on the one hand, or ſelf-flattery, on the other.

By reſpect of perſon, which I intend firſt to conſider, I mean eſpecially that evil to which the preſent age is, beyond all others, addicted—blind deference to abilities.

To the Church it belongs to encourage and to ſet forward the improvement of every talent, to require good evidence of ſufficient probity and learning from

thoſe who are to ſtand at her altars, to reward the diligent, to cheriſh every pious labour: but let us ever remember that, amidſt all threatened dangers, that Ark is ſafe, in which the Word of God only is depoſited.

I wiſh you to bear in mind the miſchief, which from age to age has ariſen, through the baſe idolatry which has been paid, among men, to ſingular and unduly eſtimated talents. For this cauſe, and not with any exception to the juſt and rightful tribute of reverence to ſuperiors, Chriſt has enjoined us to "call no man "Maſter."

I need not, before conſiderate and enquiring perſons, uſe much pains to ſet forth the fatal conſequences which have taken place in all times, to the prejudice of Chriſtianity, from the arrogance of ſome, and from an headlong devotion to them on the part of others. Every Schiſm, every Hereſy, may be traced directly to this ſource.

St. Paul rejected with indignation, and with a lively apprehenſion of impending miſchief, the cry of Partizans. He turned with horror and diſdain from thoſe who would have diſtinguiſhed themſelves by his name.

Speaking of the Chriſtians in the firſt age, a learned Writer* of our Church has the following obſervations—"That, in all the names which they choſe, "there was ſtill ſome peculiar relation to Chriſt and "God, from whom they would be named, and not "from any mortal man, how great or eminent ſoever. "Party names, and human appellations, they ever pro-"feſſed to abhor." "We take not our denomination from "men," ſays Chryſoſtom; "we have no Leaders, as "the followers of Marcion, or Manichæus, or Arius." "No," ſays Epiphanius, "the Church was never "called ſo much as by the name of any apoſtle: we "never heard of Petrians, or Paulians, or Bartholo-"mæans,

* Bingham, in his Eccleſ. Antiq.

" mæans, or Thaddæans, but only of Chriſtians, from " Chriſt. They obſerve," he adds, " that this was " only the property of Sects and Hereſies, to take " party names, and denominate themſelves from their " Leaders." The ſame writer remarks ſoon after, that it is recorded to have been the " uſual queſtion of " Donatus to all foreigners, *Quid apud vos agitur de parte* " *meâ?* and that the biſhops, who were his followers, " were uſed to ſubſcribe themſelves, *Ex parte Donati.*"

I cannot but rejoice that our Church, as ſhe hath kept cloſe to the primitive rule, by declining all private appellations, has alſo ſteered the right courſe, with regard to thoſe diſtinguiſhed perſons, who in any age have laboured in the Miniſtry, with ſuch ſanctity of manners, ſuch zeal, and ſuch vigour of mind, that their memories have been juſtly accounted precious. The common intereſt, and cloſe bonds of an holy communion, and ſpiritual regard, endear the names of faithful perſons, in divers countries, to each other; but

but we are not ſent to the writings of any, ſave of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, as to the oracles of truth.

The Scripture is the ground of all our teaching; and never till the Roman Church had the boldneſs to frame new articles of faith, was that maxim of the Tridentine Creed impoſed upon the conſciences of Chriſtians as a matter of faith—that the unanimous conſent of Fathers ſhould be the interpretation of Scripture.

We reverence any meaſure of that Grace which flows down from one only Head. The Scriptures and their authority excepted, we cannot expect a more convincing and ſatisfactory account of the faith and practice of the Church, than from thoſe who were the Guides or Members of that houſehold, in the ſeaſons of its early purity. But we find no promiſe made to any, after the firſt meſſages of truth were publiſhed and confirmed, that they ſhould do more in regard to doctrine, than preach the word of God, without adding

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any maxims of their own. Where argument and evidence attend them, the ſentences of ancient writers in the Church have great weight; but their opinions muſt be referred to that ſtandard, which is the common rule of faith.

Very manifeſt has been the folly of attempting to reduce all truth to the ſtandard of opinion, even that of the beſt men, in whoſe word or writings we have no warrant that human error ſhall be ſhut out. With what ſucceſs ſuch a ſcheme of interpretation has been deviſed, may be learned from thoſe who have made the experiment. *

Concerning

* A celebrated perſon of the laſt age (Lord Digby), whoſe youth was diſtinguiſhed by an intimate acquaintance with the Fathers, profeſſed to have made the trial; and he ſet forth the reſult of his enquiry, which was diſappointment. He declared this in a letter of ſuch ſtrength, and of ſo full conviction, that when he lapſed unfortunately from his firſt ſound judgment, into the errors of the Roman Church, it was obſerved by all, that he never was able to take off his own arguments.—Whereupon I muſt remark, that this example reflects no diſcredit on the writings

Concerning matters of belief in thoſe days, and matters of fact in the government of the Church, their teſtimony, though it be not the rule itſelf, becomes a demonſtration of the univerſal reception of it in one ſenſe. But in matters controverted, in doubtful points which ſtand apart, or ariſe at ſome diſtance from the main principles of truth into which men are baptized, the teſt thus ſought, muſt needs be found defective. It will fail, not ſo much through the common fallibility of human judgment, as from this circumſtance—that the ſentences of the Fathers were not framed to meet the queſtions of modern times and controverſies; and therefore the ſame Father frequently furniſhes paſſages which are wreſted to maintain oppoſite opinions, to none of which they were intended to apply.

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tings of the Fathers. Had the reſearches of that noble perſon been confined to the public ſymbols and profeſſion of the faith, or to the known and univerſal form of diſcipline and order in the Church, his labour would have been more happy. He confeſſes in the fulleſt manner, that, on ſuch points, the Chriſtian writers of the early ages ſpake the ſame thing.

It is far from being my deſign to endeavour to diſparage any the leaſt of thoſe eminent and good men, who, in early ages of the Church, have laboured in the Word, and who by their writings have bequeathed a precious treaſure to ſucceeding times. I deſire to ſpeak with reverence of ſo high and valuable a part of learning, and have ever regarded with abhorrence the miſchievous and malicious induſtry which has been employed by ſome, in expoſing the failings of faithful perſons in paſt times—but I think it behoves us to uſe all human authority with a ſtrict eye to its juſt claims upon us.

It has been the misfortune of the beſt men, not to make their own humility, the meaſure of their eſtimate of others. Had they thought the books and notions of others, of no more importance than their own, with due allowance for mutual and common defects, it might have conduced much to leſſen difficulties in the paths of ſtudy.

It has not been by their writings only that eminent men have been ſerviceable to the Church.

The venerable Paphnutius wrought a more effectual ſervice to the Church, and gave a truer ſentence, in his ſhort ſpeech in the Council of Nice, upon the queſtion of celibacy, than was contained in the many pages upon that ſubject, ſent by others into the world. An undue veneration for great names, ſupplied defect of argument on that point, and made way for thoſe unjuſt and pernicious reſtraints, which, after long ſtruggles, were impoſed upon the Clergy of the weſtern Church.

It is not my intention to deny, that he who by his writings extends his labour beyond the circle of his own peculiar charge, takes a moſt effectual method of rendering ſervice to his fellow-creatures, both with regard to ſcope and permanency. But I would remark, by way of caution againſt undue admiration of talents

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ſo exerted, that we muſt not regard that diſplay of them as the ſole ſtandard of abilities.

Many excellent perſons contract a diffidence from ſuperior learning: others, with a ſmaller ſhare of erudition, attempt more for the ſervice of the world. Both may be very laudable: the one, who ſatisfies the calls of duty—but with reſerve; the other, who ſtrives to make his talent as widely uſeful as he can. There may neither be a want of zeal on the one part, nor a redundance of conceit on the other. We ſhould judge ſoberly and charitably of both.

Let us then, with reſpect to others, whether living or departed, give the juſt tribute of eſteem and praiſe to well-cultivated and well-directed talents, more eſpecially as they may be uſeful to ourſelves, and to the world, in the great intereſts of our final hope: but let us not be infatuated by the admiration of any man's endowments or attainments. Let us not for a

moment forget, that whether they be with us, or againſt us, we have that for our foundation, for our ground and pillar, which no private hand hath ſet up, and which no human art or audacity can pull down.

We are bound indeed to uſe all earneſt diligence; for though the Church of Chriſt ſhall not fail from the face of the earth, nor the gates of hell prevail againſt it, yet whole nations may loſe their part in it, which ſuggeſts ſufficient motives for every diligent endeavour.

In every age there will be the ſelf-willed and perverſe; but the hour of their imaginary triumphs has ever been of ſhort duration, whilſt the victories of truth become immortal.

It reſts to add a few words, concerning our conduct with regard to our own reputation among men.

To receive honour one of another, becomes a powerful temptation even to the beſt regulated minds. It is

natural

natural and praiſeworthy to endeavour to attach the good eſteem of others. A good name has a ſweet ſavour, and ſomething of its fragrance may be allowed to gratify the ſenſes of thoſe who ſhed it abroad; but though it may be one recompence of virtue, it is not its prime motive, nor ſhould it be its end.

Concerning the ſuperior cogency and value of the word and will of God over the opinions of the world, and the ſuffrages of men, it muſt in this place be unneceſſary to uſe many arguments. With the main principle of duty, a compliance with the will of God revealed to us, we ſhould, by the great end and obligation of our profeſſion as Chriſtians, and of our Order as ſtewards of things ſacred, be particularly converſant.

From the difficulty of pleaſing God and men at the ſame time, aroſe the many precepts of the Goſpel, which enjoin its followers to diſregard the praiſes of men; not becauſe they are worthleſs, where they are juſt; but becauſe they are ſo often venal and erroneous.

Upon

Upon the ſame account the firſt witneſſes to Chriſtianity were told to proſecute the ways of holineſs, and to publiſh to the world the word of truth, by good report, and evil report, not with indifference to either; but with a fixed reſolution to purſue the main end, under every circumſtance.

For the ſame cauſe, we are encouraged to do good to the undeſerving and ungrateful, againſt the meaſure of worldly equity, becauſe God is the true end, and ultimate receiver of our bounty.

For the ſame cauſe, is ſecrecy enjoined in the performance of good acts, that the applauſe of men may not corrupt the heart, and turn aſide the oblation from the Altar of God, to the fane of Vanity.

Let me here add, that the Church of England has ever obſerved a due diſcretion with regard to popularity. She has ſometimes rode upon that billow, when it has been

been raiſed againſt her; but, when the ſwelling has ſubſided, has reſted always upon ſome nobler eminence. Let her members therefore, and her miniſters cheriſh that equal temper, and neither raiſe the guſts of popularity, nor fear them.

With reſpect to ſuch parts of our ſtudies as we may deſign for the public eye, let this be the great conſideration—the good which is likely to be wrought. The benefit that a book produces in promoting the intereſts of religion, and the growth of virtue among men, muſt be the true teſt of its worth.

They who bear in mind the good of others, cannot wholly loſe their labour; they will ſurely do good to themſelves.

In the writings of ſome men we perceive very little deſire to help, but ſufficient zeal to expoſe, the defects of others. We never find ſo much vanity and arrogance in any

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pages, as in thoſe which ſeem to be calculated only to propagate doubt, and to multiply queſtions in all topics of enquiry. Whereupon I muſt obſerve, that of all vices, Pride is the moſt inconſiſtent with the ſtate of man; and of all Pride, literary Pride the moſt unbecoming.

I cannot conclude theſe reflexions without ſignifying to you, my Brethren, the ſatisfaction which I experienced in my progreſs during the laſt ſummer, from the attendance and regard which were paid to the important objects of our joint concern, at that time.

It was not the bare pleaſure of receiving one teſtimony of your readineſs in a neceſſary work, which I then felt, and ſhould now expreſs. I gained a ſufficient aſſurance that any circumſtances of moment which may happen to ariſe, will not fail to engage a ſimilar care to that which was ſo punctually and cheerfully diſplayed.

Nor

Nor can I withhold my teſtimony of approbation from thoſe who appeared together with you in their office: whoſe readineſs at that time will, I truſt, be found to have been ſucceeded by a due performance of what ſeemed to be needful.

Many of the bleſſings which God hath promiſed to his Church, depend upon the unanimity and good-will of its members.

The repair and reſtoration of the Temple and City of Jeruſalem under Nehemiah, was more hindered by inteſtine feuds, than by the incurſions of enemies. The walls were manned, and the watches placed againſt the common foe; but Tobias and Sanballat cauſed more trouble, by the ſecret oppoſitions which they carried on within the city, than the malice of the neighbouring enemies were able to effect.

Let me hope then, that unanimity and mutual good-will may continue to unite us all in the ſervice of God, in the care of his worſhip, and in every good deſign.

THE END.

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